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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 008554

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF GOMA UN WORKERS

Classified by Economic Officer Katherine Simonds. Reason:
1.5(d).

1. (C) Summary: Representatives of UN agencies in Goma believe the international community in general and the UN in particular are overly focused on the Congo war instead of on the deeper rooted problems of the Congo. While their analysis may in part reflect their own tunnel vision, it strongly suggests that ending the war will not end the need for continued intense international involvement in the Congo. On the other hand, in our view, unless the war is ended, even unlimited international engagement will not be able to solve the sub-region's problems. End summary.

2. (C) Econoff's five day visit to Goma provided ample opportunity for conversations with a wide range of officers representing UN agencies in Goma. Econoff found them to be dedicated, professional, well-informed and well-coordinated. They form a close-knit community that has developed its own analysis of the crisis in the Kivus based on their day-to-day experience and they feel alienated from their head offices in Kinshasa. Not surprisingly, they believe the resources they have are inadequate to the task they face (a situation which the UN acknowledges in its Consolidated Appeal for the DRC). More disturbingly, however, they also feel hobbled by their head offices in their ability to fulfill their basic humanitarian mission. This "malaise" (which caused the resignation of OCHA's respected Goma coordinator) is shared in different degrees by many UN officers working in Goma.

Clashes with Kinshasa Home Offices

3. (C) Charles Petrie, the departing OCHA coordinator, devoted a significant amount of time over his last few days in Goma to briefing Econoff on the complicated humanitarian crisis in the Kivus. Although he did not volunteer the information, he responded frankly when asked why he was leaving the UN. He told Econoff he was tired of being considered the enemy by Kinshasa. (Asked what he meant by Kinshasa, Petrie specified the UN system. Petrie said that his criticism of the UN in Kinshasa did not, however, extend to MONUC or the SRSG.) He said he and his colleagues had been arguing for more than a year that a concerted effort to promote reconciliation at the grassroots level in the Kivus was crucial to avoid an escalation of violence. Their advice had been ignored, and they had been forced to watch as the number of internally displaced in North Kivu rose by 700,000 in the last year and 3-400,000 in the last few months. Petrie said that the final straw motivating him to resign was the accusation by UN colleagues in Kinshasa that he had ghost-written the USG non-paper on the humanitarian crisis in the DRC.

"Pacification"--A Question of Definition

4. (C) A Goma-based UNHCR officer told Econoff that, in recognition of the need to promote tolerance, the UN had finally adopted a policy requiring that all development projects contain a human rights component. He referred to this as a pacification campaign, and was surprised to be told that, for an American, "pacification" implied encouraging the population to accept the RCD/Rwandan administration. For him pacification referred to relations within the community of Congolese civilians.

5. (C) Conflicting interpretations of the word pacification symbolize the gulf between the UN's Goma officers and their colleagues in Kinshasa. Officers in Goma generally agree that the current war is fundamentally a Rwandan invasion, and that the RCD is a largely incompetent and extremely unpopular puppet regime. They believe, however, that there are ethnic differences (such as the Hema-Lendu conflict) which, though they may have been aggravated by the war, long predate it. They believe that a combination of development projects and "pacification" can help communities of Congolese to live

together peacefully, both in the current context and longer term.

NGOs and Politics

16. (C) Bukavu civil society is a prime candidate for this human rights training, according to most UN officers in Goma. They repeatedly told econoff that the RCD's ban on political parties has turned politicians into NGO leaders. Purported human rights NGOs in Bukavu really pursue political agendas, and these often include ethnically divisive policies. Petrie noted that the Swedes and the Dutch have stopped funding Bukavu's civil society organizations for this reason. The UNHCR representative said he was trying to convince Human Rights NGO's that they should preserve their credibility and stop publishing undocumented and often wildly inflated accounts of violations, such as the Katagota massacre. (He said that he believed a serious massacre of perhaps 40 civilians had indeed occurred at Katagota, but that civil society undermined its own interests by publishing accounts claiming up to 400 victims.) UN officers also believe that political activism in Bukavu is exacerbating the economic deprivation of residents of South Kivu by, for example, declaring lengthy general strikes (villes mortes) which close the markets in which many of the poor earn their daily living.

A Plea for Roads

17. (C) Many of Econoffs Goma interlocutors, including UN officers, said they believe the international community should put more resources into road reconstruction in the Kivus. They believe better roads will immediately improve the economic situation of rural communities by providing access to markets, and that reducing economic deprivation will reduce ethnic rivalry for scarce resources. They also believe that reducing the isolation of ethnically homogeneous communities will promote tolerance.

Comment

18. (C) From a distance, and with the cultural baggage of a typical American, the resistance of Bukavu's civil society is an admirable and appropriate response to occupation. Calls for road-building and pacification campaigns sound like collaboration. The near-unanimous and sincere arguments put forward by UN officers in Goma, however, merit attention. They at least suggest that, while currently focusing on initiatives to end the Congo war, the international community needs to prepare itself for a long and deep involvement in the reconstruction of the Congo once the war is over. In the short term, however, ending the war remains the sine qua non for resolving the Congo crisis.
SWING